



UNITED STATES SENATOR • NEBRASKA

**CHUCK HAGEL**

P R E S S   R E L E A S E



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Contact: Deb Fiddelke or  
Joy Ditto, (202) 224-4224

## **Hagel Holds Hearing on Benefits of Biotechnology to Combat Hunger and Poverty**

Washington, D.C. - U.S. Senator Chuck Hagel (R-NE) held a hearing today to examine the benefits of biotechnology, especially in agriculture, for the future of developing countries. "Without using biotechnology, it will be impossible to feed the world's poor in the future without destroying the environment. World poverty breeds hunger, war and instability. Biotechnology can be one tool for building productive capacity in poor countries and enhancing world stability," Hagel said.

Hagel's hearing was the first in the Senate to look at how biotechnology will be able to help developing countries combat poverty and hunger. Much of the testimony focused on a report issued yesterday by the U.S. National Academy of Sciences (NAS) along with seven other academies from around the world. The report embraced the use of biotechnology to aid developing nations, and expressed concern about the backlash against the technology in Europe and elsewhere.

"Virtually all scientists agree that biotechnology offers great hope for developing new vaccines, improving nutrition, and improving crop yields while reducing the need for the application of expensive pesticides and fertilizer. The question has been whether there are risks inherent to biotechnology that exceed any possible advantages it might provide," said Hagel, who chairs the Foreign Relations subcommittee on International Economic Policy, Export and Trade Promotion.

The NAS report also warned that governments and biotech companies need to do more to make the technology relevant and usable by farmers in poor countries. "Clearly, biotechnology offers a great opportunity for the American economy, American farmers and American workers. The United States leads the world in this technology. This advantage will continue, even as the technology is adopted abroad. Few, however, have been looking specifically at biotechnology's promise for developing countries. Its application may be most needed in developing nations," Hagel added.

"Even though global population growth is slowing, the world's current population of 6 billion will grow by at least another 2 billion in the next 30 years. Virtually all of that growth will occur in developing countries. Without the kind of productivity improvements offered through biotechnology, many developing countries will

clear ever more tropical forests and plant on ever more marginal lands. We should be seeking better productivity from existing high-quality crop lands – in America as well as in developing countries. I believe that biotechnology is good for both the American farmer and the developing country farmer,” Hagel concluded.

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